



NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Action Research

facilitator's handbook

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What is a Good Action Research Question?

- > The research question is **significant**: one that focuses on teaching and learning practices that could have an impact on students' behavior or achievement.

One example of a significant question: *What can I do to encourage quiet high school English students to participate actively in class discussions?*

- > The research question is **manageable**: one that is do-able within the time constraints of the researcher. It is neither so broad as to be impossible to answer, nor is it so narrow that it cannot offer much insight.

One example of a question that could be too broad:
Why don't students do homework?

One example of a question that could be too narrow:
What can I do to get students to stop chewing gum in my class?

- > The research question is **contextual**: one that is embedded in the day to day work of the researcher rather than an extra project added on to existing teaching tasks.

One example of a question that goes beyond the context of the classroom: *What can be done to redefine young women's perceptions of themselves as women in the classroom?*

One example of a contextual question: *What motivational strategies can I employ to increase the achievement of seven of my African American students who are failing in science?*

What is a Good Action Research Question?

- > The research question is **clearly stated**: one that accurately conveys the focus and scope of the research.

One example of a clearly stated question: *What happens when I attempt to use the activities developed for my gifted classes in middle school science with a heterogeneous class?*

- > The research question is **open-ended**: one that is phrased to generate a broad range of insights or understandings rather than to prove a specific point or to compare experimental and control groups.

One example of an open-ended question: *What happens when I try to teach basic algebraic concepts to sixth graders?*

One example of a question that seeks to prove a point: *Should our district adopt a new curriculum that teaches sixth graders algebraic concepts?*

- > The research question is **self-reflective**: one that focuses on the actions or practice of the researcher.

One example of a self-reflective question: *How might I change my questioning strategies so that my ninth grade English students begin to see and examine in depth the key themes in literature?*